

Day 60 – Apr. 21

As we continue the chronicling of short-lived kings in Judah (seven days? really?), and the bloodshed that is so much a part of Israel's (and therefore our) history, we see some familiar names. We find the origin of Samaria, famous in the gospels both for the Samaritan woman at the well and the Good Samaritan. And we end with a very famous name in Old Testament studies, Ahab. No, not the whale guy. Ahab marries Jezebel, and the two of them become the evil foil against which most of Elijah's ministry takes place.

When Jeroboam's son Nadab becomes king, Baasha rises up and takes the throne by murdering Nadab. He then goes on to slaughter the entire family line of Jeroboam, a common act by new kings not of the family line of the current king. David was remarkable in that rather than wiping out Saul's line, he made space for Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, to be part of his own family, thus earning Mephibosheth's loyalty.

But I was struck in this reading that Baasha is then described as one who "followed the example of Jeroboam". Having wiped Jeroboam's dynasty away, Baasha then goes on to lead just as Jeroboam did. As the reading continues, we see that this was not uncommon among the kings of Judah, and that "followed the example of Jeroboam" became a catchphrase meaning "didn't follow God's ways".

Nonetheless, it got me thinking about how often we decry and fight against someone, only to take up their very model as our own. Whether a political leader accusing the other of slander and then going on to slander them, or an evangelical complaining that another has prooftexted their argument only to do the same to win said argument, we all have times when we fall into this trap. When we can see this behavior in ourselves, it is a good indication that we are not arguing against an idea but against a person. If we are willing to emulate our enemies, then we are not truly against their ways but against them. We have to be very careful in our theological, political, and other debates that we are fighting against ideas and not just people.